



February 10, 2010

To: All Prospective Offerors

Subject: Amendment #1 to Request for Proposals No. RFH-0-40428, "Communications Support Services"

Amendment #1 is hereby issued to respond to questions received regarding the subject Request for Proposals (RFP) No. RFH-0-40428. Please note that edits may have been made to the actual questions to address duplicate questions or to protect business-sensitive information provided in the original questions. The essence of the original question was not affected.

Q1. The following group of questions concern "small business" definitions and intentions; one reply is offered for all:

Describe what is meant by the Small Business Concern definition that reads, ". . . not dominant in the field of operation in which it is bidding on Government contracts and NREL subcontracts." Does this mean the dominant PR firm in Denver does not meet the Small Business Concern definition? If so, how is dominance defined – by revenue, staff, years in business, awards, etc.?

Are you anticipating hiring some 2 -3 person small businesses, or are you looking for larger "small" firms closer to the maximum size definition of small business standard on page 9 of the RFP?

Is it an advantage to be a certified woman-owned business?

How many small businesses will you be selecting in each category?

Does any special paperwork need to be filed to classify as a small business entity?

Regarding the codes for small business size standards, do writing/editing services fall under the "all other" code?

Are the Business Size Standards based on a per-year average of annual gross revenue or a three-year cumulative of annual gross revenue?

We qualify as a small business under the definition of how much the firm grosses each year, but we were wondering if we need to do anything further to qualify for the "Small Business Set-Aside," such as register with the Small Business Administration.

Are any official registrations, etc., needed to successfully qualify for this proposal?

A1. In accordance with the cover page of the RFP, "One hundred percent (100%) of this requirement has been set aside for award to small business concerns." Also, in accordance with Section 13 of the RFP, "This is a total small business set-aside

procurement” under which the NAICS Codes and Small Business Size Standards are specifically stated and defined.

Additional information pertaining to Small Business Concerns, certification, NAICS Codes and Business Size Standards may be obtained from your local Small Business Administration office or www.sba.gov.

Q2. Does the business applying have to be incorporated or is it sufficient to have a business license in its state of residence?

A2. Businesses or individuals do not have to be incorporated to participate in this solicitation. It is not appropriate for NREL to provide guidance regarding business license requirements.

Q3. Does the business need to be in Denver or in close proximity to Golden?
Will vendors from outside the geographical region be considered?

A3. This solicitation is not confined to the Denver Metro area.

Q4. In section 6.1 for demonstrated technical abilities, the language specifies a number of examples to provide. Is it permissible to submit more examples than specified? For example, in Category B, it requests three samples of work. Can an offeror submit more than 3 samples?

If we comply with the requirements for the proposal, can we also supply an additional proposal via website or DVD?

A4. Proposals shall adhere to the requirements stated in the RFP.

Q5. What type of evaluative process do you anticipate at the end of the first 12-month period to determine if an award will be extended another 12-month period?

A5. An evaluation process is performed by NREL prior to exercising each option period. See Article 2 - Period of Performance in the Proforma Subcontract Schedule.

Q6. What are the projected communications budgets and timelines based on? For example, are (sic) there a set list of projects in each of the four categories, or is this merely a preliminary budget allocation without specifics?

A6. The estimated periods of performance and total funding per category are based on estimates derived from past, current, and projected future needs of the NREL Communications Office.

Q7. Was this RFP distributed directly to potentially qualified small businesses? If so, how was that list developed? Or was it posted publicly with the intent that potentially qualified small businesses would find it?

A7. The RFP was posted on NREL's website for public access. Notification of its posting was sent via email to parties who had independently expressed an interest in receiving such notification.

- Q8. Does each element of the Third Party Information Technology Security Questionnaire need to be addressed, as many of the elements are not standard for a public relations service provider? Do you have a document that describes the technology security requirements for third-parties?

Regarding systems access to NREL's electronic information (public websites excluded), does NREL want the "Third Party Information Technology Security Questionnaire" form submitted *with* the proposal, as indicated in RFP section 11, or submitted only "if NREL determines the work effort requires systems access to NREL's electronic information (websites excluded)" as indicated in RFP section 10f?

If the Third Party Information Technology Security Questionnaire is required with the proposal, does NREL permit/support VPN (virtual private network) or other secure remote access to project related sites and network folders?

A8. The Third Party Information Technology Security Questionnaire is not required with the proposal.

As stated in Section 10f, Cyber-Security Requirements of the RFP: "...if NREL determines the work effort requires systems access to NREL's electronic information, the Subcontractor shall be required to complete and submit a 'Third Party Information Technology Security Questionnaire'.

If it is determined that the 'Third Party Information Technology Security Questionnaire' is required, NREL's Information Services Office will work directly with each Subcontractor to ensure NREL's security measures are sufficiently addressed."

- Q9. Is it guaranteed that each selected subcontractor will receive an active work order for communication support services during the first year of the [sub]contract?

A9. There is no guarantee of work orders.

- Q10. What type of document is sufficient to support the labor rates stated in the Labor Rate Proposal Form?

A10. Documentation that verifies the proposed labor rates as being the actual rates used by the offeror in its normal course of business is acceptable. This may generally include payroll records, forward pricing agreements, accounting records, etc.

- Q11. Is there an hourly rate that you are accustomed to paying for "Communications Project Coordination" work?

Given that there is a large variation among regional labor rates, is there information regarding acceptable rates (or previous accepted bids) we can review?

A11. The requested information is NREL business-sensitive and not available to the general public. This effort is a competitive solicitation and each proposal and the hourly rates included therein will be evaluated on an individual basis in accordance within the stated requirements in the RFP.

- Q12. Since there is no real defined scope (individual tasks) are you assessing "value" by cost/hour or is there some other metric you are using to determine agency pricing value?

A12. This solicitation is based on Best Value Selection as defined within several sections of the RFP.

Q13. How many projects are planned per year for each category (if there is a plan)?

A13. The number of projects is unknown. In accordance with Appendix A, Statement of Work, Section 6, Work Orders and Deliverables - "All tasks shall be assigned and confirmed with the issuance of an NREL Work Order," as needs are identified.

Q14. Do you have a requirement to diversify the firms you contract with for these services? i.e., is there a disadvantage or advantage to submitting for all categories?

A14. Evaluation of all proposals received will be in accordance with the terms of the RFP. *An Offeror may submit a separate proposal for one, two, three, or all four categories (See Section 9 of the RFP for specific instructions.)*

Q15. Given the restrictions on subcontracting as defined in Section 6.3 of the RFP, is the contracting authority open to joint ventures between independent small businesses wishing to team together?

May two small businesses apply together, or must one be the primary and the other a subcontractor?

A15. Offerors may team together. However, one party must be the primary offeror. All other participants will be classified as lower-tier offeror(s) (potential lower-tier subcontractors). All applicable cost elements of lower-tier offerors must be provided in the proposal for all participants.

Q16. Will you reply by posting answers to the NREL website, in writing, by email, or by some other method?

If answers to questions are posted to the NREL website, will all potential respondents be able to see answers to all questions?

A16. Questions received by the deadline date of 02/01/10 are answered in this Amendment #1. All parties who submitted questions have been notified that the Amendment is posted on the NREL Website at http://www.nrel.gov/business_opportunities/solicitations_rfps.html.

Q17. The SOW notes that [sub]contractors may attend project review meetings via telephone. Do you anticipate any need for [sub]contractors to travel to Golden, CO for other meetings or information gathering after subcontract award? If yes, at what intervals would you anticipate holding such meetings?

A17. No. All project review meetings will be held via telephone. No travel costs will be authorized or allowable for project review meetings. If any travel is required, it will be addressed accordingly within the specifics of individual work orders.

Q18. Should the proposal provide staffing information to cover all work in a given category for each award year?

A18. In accordance with the RFP, Section 9f, the Labor Rate Proposal Form “shall include the fully burdened direct labor rates for **each personnel category for the base period and each of the four (4) option periods.**”

Q19. Given that this proposal covers “as-needed tasks,” how much work do you anticipate that the writing and editing work will require?

A19. In accordance with the RFP, Section 4, the **estimated** funding anticipated is shown for each Category. These figures are based on NREL’s best estimate at this time.

Q20. Is there a defined project of work on which to base our bid, or is the cost evaluated based on hourly rates?

A20. Please see Sections 6, 7, and 8 of the RFP for NREL’s stated evaluation process for proposals received under this RFP.

Q21. Does the award amount include out-of-pocket expenses, or labor only?

A21. The fully burdened hourly rates proposed should include all costs for overhead and administrative expenses. Unless required by an individual Work Order, no additional expenses are anticipated.

Q22. On the Title Page, is there a specific order in which you want to see the required information that you outlined in the RFP?

A22. In accordance with the RFP, Section 9a, the title page for each proposal must contain all the information requested – there is no particular order required. However, there must be a separate title page with all the information included for each and every Category proposed, e.g., one title page for Category A – Writing/Editing, one title page for Category B – Web-related Communications Services, etc.

Q23. The RFP states that the Technical Proposal be no longer than two pages and also states that the Demonstrated Performance Summary be no longer than 1 page. Does the one page Demonstrated Performance Summary count towards the two-page Technical Proposal limit?

A23. No. In accordance with the RFP, Section 9d, “The technical proposal for each category proposed shall not exceed two (2) pages (**excluding the sample summary pages and resumes**).”

Q24. Is it okay to provide Project Descriptions, Resumes, Business References, Labor Rate Proposal Forms, NREL’s Representations and Certifications, and Organizational Conflicts of Interest Information as appendices to the Technical Proposal?

A24. No. Offerers are required to submit proposals in accordance with the RFP, Section 9 which specifically states how proposals must be prepared and how many copies of each portion are required.

Q25. Is NREL’s Communications Office looking for an “in house” video presence at the lab?

A25. No.

- Q26. Does the scope of this effort represent new work, or is this a re-compete?
If a re-compete, can you provide the incumbent's name(s) and contract number(s)?
If a re-compete, can you provide the approximate value (\$) per year of the current contract?

A26. This effort is a new competitive requirement and each proposal received will be evaluated on an individual basis in accordance with the RFP.

Because this is a negotiated, competitive procurement, NREL makes known neither the number nor names of any of the potential offerors that may submit a proposal under this RFP.

- Q27. What is the scope of the work for each of the four categories? What would be a typical assignment for each category? Would it likely be one project or a project with numerous deliverables? What would be typical deadlines? What would be the frequency of assignments?

A27. The information available is provided in the Statement of Work (Appendix A).

- Q28. The following questions have been edited to protect business-sensitive information provided in the content of the original question, as follows:

- a. It seems like the RFP is written more for a sole proprietorship than a [staff augmentation] company. [Do] you see yourselves awarding any portion of this RFP to a [staff augmentation] company or will it mostly be small independents who would be bidding and then actually doing the work themselves?

A28a. It is NREL's intent to receive proposals from small businesses whose primary business mission and core competencies directly support the requirements stated in the Statement of Work and directly reflect the NAICS codes listed in Section 13 of the RFP.

- b. My second question would have to do with the number of examples you are asking for. [Our company] provides professional employees to fill various Government projects. We are not able to provide samples of work as requested in 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3 due to security requirements. Could you please let us know if we are still qualified for this opportunity?

A28b. Proposals shall adhere to the requirements stated in the RFP.

- c. Can we subcontract parts out or use our employee's portfolio to represent our company?

A28c. The intent of this question is not fully understood to provide an effective answer. Proposals shall adhere to the requirements stated in the RFP.

- Q29. Regarding the Labor Rate Proposal Form... may I prepare a narrative page that describes my base rate? Also on that page, may I describe my overhead computations in a narrative format?

A29. Completion of the Labor Rate Proposal Form is required. An offeror may include additional explanation as necessary. However, additional supporting documentation may also be required during evaluation.

- Q30. On the Representations and Certifications form, in Section 4E there's not a choice for a sole proprietorship... Is the best way to enter this information in "Other"?

A30. Yes. Additional information may also be requested during evaluation, if needed.

Q31. For the Labor Hour Form, how do I calculate the loading fees for a standard rate? For example, I usually just go by a standard rate in the industry and don't break it down by administrative costs, etc. Is there a formula for that I can use?

A31. See answer #A29.

Q32. Does the 1-inch margin on all sides requirement pertain to graphics on the cover page?

A32. There is no spacing restriction on the cover page of the proposal; however, the required information must be included.

Q33. What are the insurance liabilities (general liability) in order to do business with NREL?

A33. See "Appendix B-6, Clause 52 – Insurance".

Q34.[D]oes NREL prefer the proposing companies to support communications efforts across technical areas?

A34. All proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the terms of the RFP.

Q35. Within Category B - Web Development, please provide examples of 'web-related tools', as differentiated from websites and web applications.

A35. Examples include gadgets, surveys, interactive graphics, and Flash-based features.

Q36. Within Category B - Web Development, please specify the expectation/deliverable for the following: "Benchmark industry best practices by researching Web sites external to NREL and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)."

A36. With redesigned and new Web sites or redesigned and new components to an existing Web site there should be clear goals. Benchmarking Web sites with similar goals allows us to learn what works, what doesn't, and why, and apply that research to our own project. The deliverable would likely be written documentation or a presentation regarding the results/conclusions of the benchmarking process. The specific deliverable would be determined on each individual work order.

Q37. Within Category B, one of the services outlined is web writing, but writing for web pages is also listed as a service required under Category A. What type of writing do you anticipate requiring under Category B and how will it differ from Category A?

A37. There is no anticipated difference in Web writing between the two categories.

Q38. What will the relationship be between web design and web development? Will the agency that creates design solutions (following NREL's web standards) also do the development? Or will this be split in some situations?

A38. This will be determined on a project-by-project basis. In some cases, the subcontractor will provide both web design and web development, and in other cases, the subcontractor will only provide web design or web development. The specific deliverable would be determined on each individual work order.

Q39. If the relationship between web design and web development is split across agencies or between the offeror and NREL, what do you anticipate being the transition process?

A39. The subcontractor will need to be available to coordinate the hand-off with other organizations working on the project and will need to provide all electronic files and specifications necessary to complete the web project. The subcontractor will be required to be available for follow up questions and consultation as needed throughout the project.

Q40. Does the work required within Category D include managing work within a single agency, or across multiple agencies?

A40. This will be determined on a project-by-project basis and identified when scoping the project work order. Some projects may require a single contractor managing and coordinating the required work. Other projects may require managing work with multiple subcontractors.

Q41. Within the Statement of Work description for Category D, please define the following statement in greater detail: "...documenting and closing out a project, product distribution, and/or conducting product and project evaluations."

A41. "Documenting and closing out a project" typically means reporting what actually happened (vs. what might have been planned), and would include information such as final costs and lessons learned. "Product distribution" refers to identifying recipients of an end product and methods used to get the products to those recipients. "Project evaluations" are strategies to measure the success (or not) of a given project/product.

Q42. Under 6.1.2 in the RFP, Category B Section A—May we provide URL's or PDF's of sites that are currently in development?

A42. Yes.

Q43. According to Communication Standards and Guidelines, all web sites on EERE need to fall into three categories:

1. Open Text Web Sites are sites hosted in the Open Text Content Management System.
2. In-Template Web Sites are sites that are in the EERE Web template, but are not hosted in Open Text.
3. Partnership Web Sites are owned by EERE but are not in the standard EERE template.

Our question: Does EERE need to own the actual framework/code of all newly developed applications or perpetual license to non-Open Text CMS websites would be acceptable?

A43. See Section 12 - Solicitation Provisions related to NREL Intellectual Property Provisions; Appendix C-3.

Q44. Is there a need for any syndication rules engine to distribute communications products to various EERE's web properties?

A44. If this need arises, NREL will handle it internally.

Q45. Are the communications projects that require Communications Project Coordination already defined at some level? Can more detail be shared? Or can you describe past projects that are similar in scope?

A45. Any project could require project coordination—from a single brochure to a Web site to an entire campaign.

Q46. Do you anticipate needing help in devising communications programs, as well as managing them?

A46. NREL may include the subcontractor in the creative team that devises communications programs.

Q47. In your SOW you indicate that all new sites and all site designs must fall into the EERE guidelines and use the EERE template. How much actual site design do you foresee requiring in the specified timeframe and how much may these designs differ from the EERE template?

A47. Sites that are required to use the EERE template must closely follow the design requirements. Not all site designs follow the EERE template. Some sites will use the NREL template. NREL's Communications Office designs and develops partnership sites that are not required to use the NREL or EERE template and these sites may require original designs.

Q48. Category A – Writing/Editing: With regard to the requested 5 samples, would you prefer samples that:

- Demonstrate facility at writing about a wide range of fields (for example, renewable energy installations, healthcare management, database design, environmental impact)
- or
- Demonstrate facility at writing to a wide range of audiences in a single field (for example, computer beginners, advanced users, programmers, business decisions makers)

A48. Submit samples that demonstrate a wide range of writing styles. For example: educational brochures, Web writing, technical writing, etc.

Q49. Category A – Writing/Editing: With regard to the editing "before and after" sample (paragraph 6.1.1.A in RFP), if a final version of a document with tracked changes is not available, is it acceptable to send a Document Compare version that shows all changes between the original document and the final document? In MS Word 97-2003 and in MS Word 2007, the Compare Document markings are identical to those made for tracked changes, but don't include a time stamp or reviewer initials.)

A49. Yes. It is acceptable to send a Document Compare version.

- Q50. Category A – Writing/Editing: Do you have a preferred process for how writers and editors interact with subject matter experts when developing draft and final materials? For example, will writers/editors be able to talk with subject matter experts by phone, skype, or other method, or will writers/editors incorporate all questions into documents sent back to subject matter experts for review and revision?
- A50. The method for interacting with subject matter experts may vary from project to project. All of the methods indicated in the question are possible.
- Q51. Category A – Writing/Editing: How many writing/editing/review cycles do you typically anticipate to get material into ready-to-use form? Specifically, for rapid-turnaround documents, should the proposal assume a single writing/editing/review cycle?
- A51. One to three review cycles are typical depending on the turnaround time for the project. The number of review cycles is identified when scoping the project.
- Q52. Category A – Writing/Editing: With regard to paragraph 6.2.a and b, how many “key personnel” resumes would you like to see? For example, would you prefer resumes for all writers/editors who might work on the project, or only for the senior/team lead writer and senior/team lead editor?
- A52. We prefer to see resumes for **all** of the individuals who may be assigned to work on NREL projects.
- Q53. Can [sub]contractors permitted (sic) to work at or deliver materials to the Washington D.C. office of NREL, for forwarding to the Golden CO office, via the organization’s own (secure) network?
- A53. Subcontractors shall work from their own place of business regardless of location.
- Q54. Will video programs be filmed and delivered in High Definition (HD) or Standard Definition (SD) format?
- A54. This will be determined on a project-by-project basis and identified when scoping the project.
- Q55. Is there a specification for archiving video footage assets?
- A55. No. Specifications will be determined on a project-by-project basis and identified when scoping the project.
- Q56. Is there a specification for archiving final approved edited program assets?”
- A56. No. Specifications will be determined on a project-by-project basis and identified when scoping the project.
- Q57. On page 2 of the Statement of Work, Category D, the first sentence states “the Subcontractor shall demonstrate its ability to provide communications support services that also meet the requirements of Category A, Category B, and Category C.” Does this mean that we must submit qualifications for categories A, B, and C if it is our intention to apply for Category D only?

A57. If it is your intention to respond to Category D only, please provide qualifications for the category(ies) stated as your specialty.

Q58. Are monthly budget estimates based on the amount of work you perceive to be allocated in any given month or based on a yearly cap? Will work be allocated fairly uniformly through the year or should we expect periods of inactivity followed by periods of significant activity?

Do you anticipate that the writing/editing workload will be fairly steady, or do you expect it to vary greatly from week to week or month to month?

A58. Workloads are unpredictable and are based solely on individual work orders in accordance with the Statement of Work, Section 6 – Work Orders and Deliverables and the Proforma Subcontract Schedule, Article 5 – Work Order Process.

Q59. Where will the work be performed?

A59. All work will be performed at the subcontractor's place of business.

Original and hard copies of completed and signed proposals must be received **by overnight delivery or U. S. Postal service** no later than **Tuesday, March 2, 2010, 4:00 p.m. Mountain Time**, in accordance with the RFP instructions. Due to security, **hand delivered proposals will not be accepted.**

Should you elect to propose, please **include confirmation of receipt and acceptance of this Amendment** in your cover letter(s) with each submitted proposal. Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Schieler [e-sig.]

Patricia A. Schieler
Subcontract Administrator II
Contracts and Business Services